

IF HEAVEN BE YOUR DESTINY!



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THE PAULIST PRESS
New York 19, N. Y.

Nihil Obstat:

JOHN M. A. FEARNs, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN,
Archbishop of New York.


New York, March 11, 1949.

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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A. BY
THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

"Come, ye blessed of My Father
possess you the kingdom
prepared for you
from the foundation of the world."

—ST. MATTHEW xxv. 34.



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If Heaven Be Your Destiny!

You are dying!

Dying? Yes!

Death, as it must come to all, has come for you!

Suddenly, unexpectedly as always, the moment is at hand.

Your eyes are slowly losing the power of sight. Your ears becoming deaf to all sounds. A heavy silence surrounds you. Inexorable night closes in on all your senses.

The persons surrounding you become as silent shadows gliding by. The world and all is melting away. You feel incredibly alone.

You think to yourself: "This is it!"

Yet in your heart there is no fear, no anxiety. Only a deep and an abiding peace. For you have done your best to make yourself worthy of God's goodness to you. To make yourself worthy of this priceless heritage of Heaven. You have sincerely repented of your sins. You have done penance. You have frequented the sacraments of God's Holy Church.

You begin to wonder: "What now?"

You begin to thrill as to a glorious adventure.

A strange feeling comes over you.

It is death!

Your soul leaves the body, and you pass out into the vast unknown.

But suddenly you are surrounded by joyous angels. One angel, especially radiant and joyous, is carrying your soul up and up into the infinity beyond. You feel an overpowering love and affection for this angel. You wonder why. Then you realize this must be your Guardian Angel whom God sent to you at your birth to watch over and care for you through your life.

Onward and upward, in breathless flight you are passing, far beyond the shining of the farthest star.

And then?

Dazzling light! But more than light, for it is Light blinding in its indescribable bliss and happiness.

Music! And yet surpassing all music! It is as a million mighty organs, and millions of mighty symphonies, and millions of mighty choruses. The sound flows and reverberates in the solemn

tones of thunderous and ecstatic praise, throughout the height and depth and breadth of eternity.

“Holy, Holy, Holy!”

And there before you, in all its splendor and glory, surpassing all imagination, incredibly beautiful and breath-taking . . . the Great White Throne of the Eternal God.

And to your soul come those words, words as of pure flame, burning in their love unutterable: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

And then?

Purgatory?

Probably!

“The eyes of God are too holy to behold iniquity,” said the prophets of old. “Nothing defiled can enter Heaven,” cried the great Apostle of love, St. John.

For your soul feels, as an unsupportable and an unbearable pain, even this nearness to its infinitely good and Holy God. The remnant and remains of sin not totally wiped away by penance, have left a darkness and defilement within your soul. A blemish and a stain clinging to its innermost being. Hence,

in the overwhelming realization of your unworthiness, you willingly, eagerly desire the purgatorial pains to burn away all that is dross, to cleanse away all stain and blemish.

But what does it matter? Apart from the happiness of Heaven there is no joy comparable to that of the souls in Purgatory.

Heaven is assured for you. You have been weighed and found worthy of your priceless heritage. Until eventually there must come that moment when, the last farthing having been paid, the soul, cleansed and purified, will enter into its eternal reward. Will enter into its final destiny.

Heaven!

But what is heaven?

What kind of a life is it, living there?

And what will you do in Heaven?

Is it possible to know anything about Heaven in this life? Is it possible for you, here and now, to comprehend the things of eternity? The Happiness of Heaven? The extent and meaning of its glory? The rapture of its bliss?

Perhaps you can not gain a comprehensive knowledge, or even a com-

pletely satisfactory idea of your eternal destiny there. But surely, in the light of your God-given reason and intelligence, illuminated by Faith, you can learn somewhat of what Heaven is, and what your eternal life will be in this glorious Kingdom of God.

WHAT IS HEAVEN ?

Have you ever seen jewelers examine some crystal gem? Have you ever watched them as they turn it from side to side, trying to catch its brilliancy, trying to better realize its beauty and worth? So, too, in like manner, you may somewhat conceive of the glory and the wonder of your eternal destination.

And even this limited knowledge will thrill your soul to its very depths. Even this halting approach to the reality of the eternal things in the life to come, must certainly change your attitude to this life. For all the trials and sorrows of this life are seen to be as nothing in the realization of the eternity which awaits you. The fear of death, and grief for the departed, are seen to be as folly. And any indifference or carelessness to

your eternal happiness is seen to be as utter madness.

For even in describing Heaven, words fail completely. It has such splendor, glory, beauty, magnificence and wonder that the favored few whom Almighty God in His love has permitted a brief glimpse into His eternal realms, can speak only in the most extravagant phrases of what they have seen. And even then, they tell us, they do not begin to convey its stupendous, unbelievable glory.

Thus Saint John in the "Apocalypse" or "Book of Revelation," in describing his vision of Heaven, speaks of the "streets of pure gold, transparent as glass." "The gates of pearl." "Rivers of crystal." "The foundation stones are of sapphire, topaz and emeralds." But all this beautiful imagery fails completely in giving a real and true understanding of its indescribable glory, beauty and splendor. And no one realized this any better than Saint John himself.

So, too, with Saint Paul, with his God-given gift of writing! After he had been taken up into the third

heaven, wishing to tell mankind of what he had seen, and yet realizing how impossible it was to convey the wonder and the glory of it all, St. Paul could only cry out again and again in joyous rapture: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him"!

Or again, Saint Stephen, the first martyr, in his terrifying martyrdom. Cruelly stoned to death! Yet he felt not those bruising, death-dealing stones, he forgot his executioners, horribly intent on killing him. He could only see, hear, and feel the wonder and the beauty of the Kingdom of Heaven which was being opened to welcome him.

Perhaps the best way to realize what Heaven is, in all its magnificence, is found in the inescapable fact that whatever God does, He does on a scale worthy of Himself.

And Heaven must be on a scale equal to the infinite glory of God, because it is in union with God. And all this grandeur, beauty, magnificence and splendor which the Blessed share, is

the grandeur, beauty, magnificence of God Himself.

In an infinitely lesser manner, of course, we know that Nature is God's handiwork. And as such it gives us a glimpse, but a very slight glimpse, of the enchantment of Heaven.

For have there not been moments in every life when the soul was thrilled in beholding the glorious works of God in His world? Perhaps it was in early childhood when you first had such an experience. Before you knew anything of the "pride of life." When your heart knew only truth, innocence, kindness and love.

Thus you wandered out into the summer fields in the stillness of a Sunday morning. On every bush the birds were singing a hymn of praise to their Creator. Along flowery paths you wandered on, drinking in the fragrance with every breath. With all the freshness and purity of childhood in your soul you looked with ecstasy into the great blue vault above. In the peace, quiet and contentment, you could almost hear the sound of angel wings.

No sin, no sorrow, no care! Hours

seemed as minutes! Minutes seemed as seconds! Yet seconds seemed to last forever!

In maturer years you may have had such moments. Some summer night by the ocean. For the ocean is an emblem of eternity itself. The moon low over the sea, hanging in the sky like a lamp of gold. Its soft light reflecting on the waves, and filtering through the tree-tops. The stars gleaming, like scattered diamonds, through crimson clouds. The warm air floating by, heavily laden with the scent of flowers and the fragrance of the pine or fir trees. The calm of the evening broken only by the murmur of the waves, and a singing bird of twilight pouring out its heart in a torrent of song. It was as though Paradise had come back to earth again!

Surely many beautiful sights have you seen as you have gone along your way through life. A majestic mountain, its snow-capped peak bathed in the early morning light.

A vast plain, stretching mile after mile, and as far as the eye can see, covered with a carpet of golden grain, ripened and ready for the harvest.

A beautiful valley between two lofty mountain ranges, and filled with orchard trees, their branches loaded with opening buds, their red and white tints softly shimmering in the sun.

Or standing on a little hilltop in the mellow autumn and gazing at the millions of stars joyfully twinkling their message of God's love to mankind.

The ever-alluring ocean, gently caressing the silvery strand of the shore, a limitless, liquid mass of greenish gold in the mellow moonlight.

But all such beautiful scenes, all such heart-stopping memories, all such uplifting and soothing recollections, are but God-given inklings of the Heaven which awaits you.

Yet they are only inklings. For in all truth, if there could be added together all the glories of the Firmament, all the splendors of the earth in all the seasons, all the sparkling treasures from the depths of the earth, and from the hidden caves of the sea, and all the wonders of human achievement, and all this multiplied millions of times—still it would be as nothing—compared to

the wonder, glory and splendor of your eternal home.

ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN

But what is meant by "eternal life in Heaven"?

Usually the first thing one thinks of, in regard to Heaven, is that it is a place of rest. And this is very true. But does this mean that Heaven is a place of idleness, wearisome laziness? Not at all! Such an idea is nonsense!

What the word really means is, that in this life you are, as it were, on a journey. Constantly advancing on and on. But upon your arrival in Heaven, your journey is over. You have arrived at your ultimate destination. Hence you are at rest. There is no more of the restlessness and uneasiness of being on your way. From now on you will be eternally at rest within yourself. At rest with all creation. At rest with your Creator Who has brought you to Himself. Thus the word "rest" means that in Heaven all those things are absent which disturb you. All those things which bring you unhappiness in this

world. Such as, for instance, sickness, poverty, suffering, and death.

Furthermore, there is no more of the misery from "man's inhumanity to man." All that sorrow and grief which comes from hate and envy, from lust, avarice and pride, from ambition and despair.

In Heaven all these things shall be no more. No hunger or thirst. No more tears. No more pain. No sickness or sufferings. For all will have an abundance and superabundance of the joy of life.

Sin shall be unknown. No more reproach of conscience. No more sting of temptation. Brother shall not rise against brother. No wars nor rumors of wars. No unkindness, no misunderstandings, no falsehood, nor insincerity. For all these evils shall have passed away forever.

Hence the peace of Heaven. The unalterable love between all who live in the Kingdom of God. Each soul rejoicing in the other's happiness and glory. Each soul partaking and sharing in the other's joy and gladness. Understanding one another, loving one an-

other, forgiving one another in all tenderness, gentleness and affectionate regard. Loving one another, even as God loves them.

Moreover, remember that to all this there shall be no end. Here on earth the future must always loom before you. The future with its fear of coming sorrow and pain. Fear for yourself and for those you love. But in Heaven there can be no such anxiety or fear. Only an eternal, overwhelming peace, contentment, and freedom from all and any sorrow.

Life on earth is ever a seeking, a waiting, a wanting; a turmoil, a trying; and an ever-renewed disappointment. But in Heaven, there is only that perfect peace, because it is the peace of God which He gives to His own.

Above all else, Heaven is a place of Joy. Infinite, complete, ecstatic joy. Joy the most pure, the most satisfying, the most thrilling that the human heart can possess. Joy in seeing God. Joy in loving God.

And why is this so?

Because in Heaven you will enjoy what is known as the "Beatific Vision."

And what is meant by this?

It means that in Heaven you will have a knowledge and love of God to which you could never attain here on earth. A knowledge and a love that is supernatural. A knowledge and a love far beyond your powers as a human being.

It means that you will know God as He is!

Not simply think about Him, nor commune with Him, nor adore Him, but you will actually look upon His unveiled Divinity, and gaze upon Him "face to face." Not only the glorified humanity of Christ,—that vision also you will see, and it will be to you a sight bringing you incredible joy and happiness,—but you shall see much more. You will look upon, and into, the Divine Essence Itself.

Can you realize what that means?

No! Such a realization is beyond your human powers to conceive. Thus as a blind man cannot see the sun and its light. He may know that it is there. He can feel its effects. He may hear it all described in detail. He may reason, and think about it. He may try to

picture it in his mind as it is. But can he really know the sun, know it as it really is? Can he really know it, when he is blind and does not have the faculty of sight?

Thus it is with you as you are in this life on earth, in regard to knowing Almighty God!

“Whom no man hath seen, or can see. Who inhabiteth the light inaccessible,” says Saint Paul. And Saint John confirms it. “No man hath seen God at any time.”

Then how can this be for you in Heaven?

Because in the Kingdom of God there will be given you an added gift of God, in order that you may thus look upon Him. And Saint John tells us what this gift shall be. “We shall be like to Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

You will be made like unto God! Your human intelligence will be marvelously strengthened by this gift of God which theologians call the “Light of Glory.” With this gift you can, and will, look upon your Heavenly Father, and live.

Then in all truth, you will be the

living child of The Living God. In all truth, He will be your Father, and you will be His own. You will live in His home. And all that He has will be yours. For you are Christ's and Christ's is God's.

All which you see, you can count as your own. You will look deep into the depths of wisdom. You will be enveloped in His glory. Adorned with His beauty, and splendor. Upborne by His infinite power and goodness and love.

And this is all summed up in the phrase: "The Beatific Vision."

And this is why Heaven is a place of joy. A joy far surpassing all human imagination.

And while it may be that this truth comes perhaps more from Faith than from human reason, yet down in your heart you know how true it is.

For what have been the moments of real joy and happiness in your life? Look back in your life and be honest with yourself! Was it some moment which you spent perhaps in some vile sin? Or in some cheap, worldly ex-

citement? Was it some moment when God was far away?

Or was it some moment when God was near to you? Some moment when you could almost feel His Presence and hear His Voice?

Surely now and then there have come to you those moments when in the very depths of your soul you realized that truth of the Psalmist's words: "What have I in Heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."

Just the thought of God has made the martyrs laugh at their torments and tormentors. It has filled the saints with ecstasy.

And if merely the thought of God, or the ecstasy of a moment's visitation, can bring such supreme happiness here on earth to souls, what must it be to possess Him forever in the world to come?

Hence the infinite joy of Heaven. To know God as you are known by Him. To love God as you are loved by Him. To possess Him with no fear of losing Him forever. To enter into His will,

to share in His blessedness, makes Heaven a place of truest happiness. A place of infinite, eternal, immeasurable and supreme joy.

A happiness and joy such that the soul can desire nothing more. For it is all-satisfying. It is ever-new. For God is happiness and joy, inexhaustible and infinite.

And now, if you will, consider one more truth concerning Heaven.

Heaven is a place of glory. "Glory, honor and peace," says the Apostle, "to every man that does well."

Hence, while Heaven is a place of God's glory, it also is a place of glory for all who are there. True it is, as the Apostle says, we shall differ in glory, as star differs from star. But all will have glory to a superlative degree. For it is God Who gives this honor and glory to each. To each will be given a special name known only to God. Each will be a prince of this eternal Kingdom of God, for they are the children of its Mighty King.

Each will be given a certain jurisdiction, a certain power of intercession, a

certain place of honor in His high court of Heaven.

And many other glories and honors which Almighty God has not as yet revealed.

And thus it is, that while no human mind can fully know what Heaven is, from these truths you surely can begin to comprehend somewhat of its happiness, glory, and magnificence. To be free from all the trials and testing of this life. To enjoy the fullest and most sublime and complete happiness and joy. To be given its honor and glory.

Yet this is but only a beginning. Only a slight indication of what the infinite love, goodness, happiness, splendor, and all the other attributes of the Infinite God, have in store for you. For "infinite" means "without bounds and without limits." Remember?

WHAT YOU WILL DO IN HEAVEN

In what does your Heavenly life consist?

In answering this question, it must be always kept in mind that the all-wise, all-good, eternal God always creates His creatures in perfect accord with

the purpose for which He made them. And all clear-thinking philosophers agree that men with their God-given desires have not been created for this world alone. And in these same God-given desires and wants, we have the answer as to what you shall do in Heaven.

For your God-given wants and desires will be satisfied in Heaven in all fullness and completeness. For instance, you will constantly advance in knowledge. For every human being yearns for, and desires to know, to learn, and to acquire knowledge.

Look around you and see how true this is. All mankind seeking to know. From the inquisitive child to the astronomer in the observatory. See the geologist in the mine, the chemist in the laboratory, the sage with his books, the crowd with the newspaper. All seeking to learn, to know more about those things in which they have their interests.

But God is knowledge. All that can be known is in Him. All the laws of nature, and all the truths of science. Every answer to every question. The

satisfying of all curiosity. All is to be found in the Beatific Vision. For seeing God "face to face," your soul will see all knowledge at its very source. Will realize that all human knowledge is but nothing, only slight and puerile glimpses into truth, as compared to the infinite wisdom of the Infinite Creator Who made all things, Who directs all things, Who governs all things, which exist in time, and in eternity.

Thus for all eternity the soul will advance in knowledge. Taught by Him Who is infinite Truth, infinite Knowledge, Himself.

The second great desire in the hearts of all, is that desire and longing for love. To be loved for yourself alone. It is the very essence of your being.

The history of the whole human race, and the story of each individual life, proves this beyond all doubt. It is the mainspring of all human action and activity.

True it is, that oftentimes men's love has been debased and led into vile and loathsome error. But nevertheless, even then, it seems, such men were really searching for love. Yearning and de-

siring to be loved. They had simply mistaken the worthiness of what they loved.

For only in God is this God-given instinct of love satisfied. Only in God can your soul find true contentment and perfect satisfaction. And only in the Kingdom of God can you find the fullness and completeness of love.

Thus the great philosopher and Saint of the fifth century, Saint Augustine, realized as he cried:

“Our hearts were made for Thee, O
God,
And restless must they be,
Until O God, this grace accord,
Until they rest in Thee.”

And the beloved Apostle Saint John, after defying all the might and power of the vicious Roman Empire, dying in exile on the far-off, barren, and bleak isle of Patmos, yet would leave as his last words for all mankind, that truth he had learned so well: “God Is Love.”

For all that is lovable is in God. All parental and filial love, all marital love and friendship, all love for the sublime and the beautiful is in Him. All pure, clean, wholesome love comes straight

from His infinite heart. And hence only in Him can love find its complete fulfillment.

And the hunger of every human soul for love is filled, and filled to its overflowing in Him Who is Love Itself, in the Beatific Vision. For in this Vision of God, loving and loved, cherished and at peace, your soul rests in perfect happiness.

Thus in eternity, face to face with The Divine Essence, your soul as it advances steadily in its knowledge of God, must necessarily advance in its love of God. For, as more and more lovable God is seen to be, so much the more and more must your soul respond. And the more your soul loves God, the more God in turn loves your soul.

Finally the third great desire which you have in this world, is the satisfaction of the senses. Your five senses are God-given, and the things which satisfy them are also from God. Hence this is all good. It is the abuse and misuse of these senses that is sinful and evil. For instance, when you seek to satisfy them apart from God, or contrary to God's laws.

And as the soul goes into eternity, it takes with it all the senses which you had here on earth. It is only the organs of these senses that are left behind. To remain here until the resurrection of the body at the Last Day.

Hence all the joys and delights of the senses you will have in Heaven. Freed from the limitations of the earth, freed from all sin, your senses, pure and untrammelled, will bring you the true delight and happiness for which God created them.

Thus as a man may be tone-deaf and color-blind and miss much that is beautiful in color and inspiring in music and melody here on earth, so in Heaven the senses thus set free from all limitations of their present state, will find new vistas and fields opened and unfolded which will bring to you such rapture and happiness as to be beyond all imagination.

Then, too, you must not forget that all beauty in nature and in art, all that enchants and thrills in melody and music, is but the handiwork of God. And in eternity, as your soul grows in knowledge and love, so will it exult,

not only in the appreciation and enjoyment of God's handiwork already known to you, but in the infinite new delights and joys which He will continuously unfold before you for your happiness.

And thus it will be with you in the Kingdom of God until that Great Day when Almighty God shall decree that it is the end of time. That "Last Day" when "The angel standing upon the sea and upon the earth" shall swear "that time shall be no longer."

Your body resurrected, no longer to know decay, fatigue, or death, shall join your soul in Heaven. Your body now spiritualized and glorified, clothed in eternal light, is now a part of you. Henceforth you will have all the faculties of body and soul. And obviously, this means for you, even greater happiness and joy.

For instance, all the present inconvenience of space and action shall cease for you. That means that you can traverse at will all those fields and realms of light. Passing with the swiftness of thought, through the boundless measures of space. From star to star.

Through all the myriad orbits of the
empyrean sphere.

Wherever you go, new and unexpected beauties will open before you. And yet, wherever you wander, the great white throne of the Eternal God shines ever near you. And from His throne the Heavenly Father smiles lovingly upon you. For you are His own for all the endless ages.

Crowds of exulting spirits will meet you at every turn and you will know them all, for there are no strangers in Heaven. And you will love them all, and be loved by all, for you are all in God, and God is in all.

And as you meet in these regions of bliss, and happily hail one another, your soul will thrill in the wonder and the glory of your Heavenly companions. They throng in thousands from every side. Yet all differing in beauty and glory.

There are the nine choirs of angels with Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and the other archangels at their head. There are the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Principalities and the Powers. Virtues, Thrones and Dominations. There are

the great Saints of the earth. Saints of whom you have read and hailed in the litanies of the Church. The great Saint Joseph, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Founders of the Religious Orders. There are the beloved Saints to whom you prayed, asking their intercession with Almighty God. And who, in response to your request, pleaded with Him so faithfully and well. There are many shining Saints of whom the world never heard because of the obscurity of their lives, but now, known and honored by all. And above all these Saints, the Blessed Mother of Christ, to whom you have been very close and precious, and who has prayed so much for you. All know you, honor you, and love you; as you know, love and honor them.

And here, too, adding to your great happiness and joy, you will be with all those so close to you on earth. Your relatives, friends and companions so dear to you in this life. Brothers and sisters, parents and children, relatives and friends, all whom you loved so dearly, will rejoice in one another. For every soul in Heaven will have a special affection for those souls that were

united with it on earth. And will continue to love them with a most special love for the relationship, friendship, and companionship in the joys and suffering shared here on earth. For all upright love continues in the hearts of all those in the eternal Kingdom of God.

For such is the Kingdom of Heaven!
Such is your eternal destination!

"The Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Such are the truths concerning your everlasting life.

And remember these truths are not based on pious imagination. Nor on sentimental hope. But they are truths firmly and solidly based on Holy Scripture. Truths handed down in unbroken tradition from the earliest ages of Christianity. Truths confirmed by your God-given reason and intelligence, illuminated by Faith.

This is the eternal life which Almighty God has destined for you in the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is yours!

If you are worthy!

If you accept God's help!



